



Saint Louis Audubon

## BULLETIN

April, 1967

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Third Baptist Church, Grand and Washington Aves.

### **"GALAPAGOS — WILD EDEN"**

ROGER TORY PETERSON

Friday, April 21, 1967 — 8:15 P.M.

As author, artist, scientist, photographer and lecturer, Roger Tory Peterson probably has interested more people in birds than any other living man. His field guides have become bird students' Bibles. They are now the standard guides for field identification for beginners and experts alike, not only in America but in Europe. His famous bird paintings and prints adorn the walls of many homes; his splendid illustrations highlight numerous bird books; and he has lectured with his films before many audiences throughout this continent and abroad.

Roger Tory Peterson was born in Jamestown, New York. When his seventh grade science teacher organized an Audubon Junior Club, the whole future course of his life was determined. Later he developed his drawing ability through five years of study at the Art Students League and the National Academy of Design in New York.

While teaching art and science in Boston, he created his first *Field Guide to the Birds*. When published in 1934 it was revolutionary, and has since sold nearly 900,000 copies. In the same year he joined the staff of the National Audubon Society, where he rewrote the same Junior Club material he had first encountered at the age of eleven. To complete his *Field Guide to Western Birds*, published in 1941, he travelled 20,000 miles. In 1954, *Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe* was published in London, became a best seller, and was soon translated into twelve languages.

Located off the coast of Ecuador in the Pacific Ocean are the Galapagos, a dozen islands born of volcanic disturbances below the bed of the sea. They have existed for scarcely more than a million years — a short time in the geological sense. Yet here are huge, unique land tortoises with shells four feet long, weighing hundreds of pounds, and presumably of great age. Here too are penguins living on the very Equator, pioneers from the colder lands down under, that have ridden the cold Humboldt Current to this tropical outpost. There are little black finches of a dozen species, flightless cormorants, and mockingbirds that are losing the power of flight. Here the

cacti have trunks like those of pine trees; the land iguanas resemble miniature dragons, and their smaller relatives are the only sea-going lizards in the world.

To some who have visited the Galapagos they are a dreadful place. Herman Melville commented, "In no world but a fallen one could such lands exist." And yet to others, these same scorching cinder-covered islands are a "Garden of Eden." As an added attraction Leonard Hall of Possum Trot Farm will introduce Mr. Peterson.

## **SPRING BIRD WALKS OF THE AUDUBON SOCIETY**

Bird walks are scheduled for Forest Park on the last two Sundays in April and the first two Sundays in May.

Sunday, April 23

Sunday, April 30

Sunday, May 7

Sunday, May 14

Meeting Place: Parking lot behind Art Museum

Time: 7:30 A.M.

Information: Call Chairman of Walks, Martin Schweg, Jr., FO 1-4226.

There will be two Saturday bird walks —

Saturday, April 29

Saturday, May 6

Meeting Place: Tower Grove entrance Missouri Botanical Garden.

Time: 8 A.M.

Tony McColl will be on hand as leader. For information call PR 6-2779.

If any changes are made in these plans a card will go out to members.

Eight pair of binoculars will be available on the Forest Park bird walks for the use of individuals needing them.

Annual Spring census will be held on Saturday, May 6th. For information and results call: YO 5-8642. We hope many groups will participate. Phone your results to Earl Hath, YO 5-8642.

## **Dedication Forest Park Bird Sanctuary**

On Sunday, April 30, there will be a dedication of a Bird Sanctuary in Forest Park. The dedication will take place at the starting point of the St. Louis Audubon Society bird walks at the rear of the Art Museum, and will comprise an area extending to Skinker Blvd. and skirting the golf course. This will be known as Forest Park Bird Sanctuary, dedicated by the St. Louis Audubon Society and sponsored by the Landscape and Gardening Committee of the St. Louis Beautification Commission. The dedication and ceremonies will take place at 10:00 A.M., Sunday, April 30.

We wish to take this opportunity to thank Mr. George E. Mobus of the Trio Manufacturing Co. of Griggsville, Ill. for his very generous donation of twelve purple martin houses and twelve bird feeders, to be located on the perimeter of the Bird Sanctuary. There will be further announcements concerning the dedication of this Sanctuary, and we hope that a good many of our members will be able to attend.

We are hoping to have Mayor Cervantes, Mr. Louis W. Buckowitz,

Director of Parks, Recreation and Forestry, and Mrs. Fred Mauntel, President of the National Council of State Garden Clubs, who will officiate together with the St. Louis Audubon Society in this dedication.

## **ST. LOUIS AREA BIRD FINDING**

By J. EARL COMFORT

Since Jan. 1st, 1967, there has been a lot of exciting birding in the St. Louis region, with an outstanding listing by Dick and Mildred (Mitzi) Anderson at the Alton Dam where they identified a black-legged kittiwake on Jan. 29th. It was a first record for our area.

Some other good finds were a whistling swan by Sally Vasse, common redpolls by Earl Hath, Mr. and Mrs. Bob Higgins, Marge Self and Warren Lammert. The redpolls showed up on 2 successive months (Jan. and Feb.) at the Shaw's Garden Arboretum where Earl Hath leads St. Louis Audubon Society Nature groups twice monthly. The swan appeared at Gilbert Lake in Jersey County, Ill. Bertha Massie produced a glaucous gull for a large Webster Groves Nature Study group at the Alton Dam. It was seen later in the same general area by various birders.

Some other reported good listings of 1967 by bird watchers have been greater scaup, oldsquaw and white-winged scoter ducks, Harlan's hawk, long eared owl, short-eared owl, red-breasted nuthatch, pine warbler, Harris' sparrow.

An incomplete report of the local bald eagle annual count showed 87 eagles.

Although not the rarest listing, perhaps 3 oldsquaw ducks at close range afforded some of the most exciting bird watching.

Feb. and Mar. contributed unusually large numbers of canvasback ducks in our vicinity with more than 4000 showing up on a single day's counting. This is very encouraging since this species was quite scarce locally in recent past years.

Our composite list of local Christmas bird counts totals 88 species.

## **EAGLE COUNT**

EMILY NORCROSS

The temperature was 26 and snow was falling Saturday morning February 18 at Clarksville, Missouri as approximately 100 St. Louis Auduboners gathered for the 1967 National Eagle Count. Due to the mild winter, the open water on the Mississippi, and the consequent shortage of killed shad for food, fewer eagles than in many years have been seen this season, so our expectations were not too high.

The count extended from the Winfield Dam to Saverton Dam, just south of Hannibal, with the eagle counters divided into five groups and assigned to different areas, under the leadership of McCune Dudley, Gus Artus, John Foster, Richard Coxsey and Joseph Saylor, to all of whom we are greatly indebted.

A total of 87 eagles were spotted, the largest concentrations being in the northern sections of our counting territory. Visibility was so poor early in the day till the snow stopped that it was not always possible to distinguish

between adult and immature, but the consensus of the authorities is that more than a quarter of eagles seen were juvenile.

In the early afternoon the eager eaglers began turning into the hospitable Warren Lammert farm for warmth, coffee and bird talk! Many species of duck, some fine hawks, among them the peregrine falcon, and the regular winter residents had been spotted during the day. And though we were disappointed in the number of eagles seen compared to last year's record of 158 it was apparent that the warm and colorfully costumed winter birders (including one four year old girl, and a young lad accompanied by a pet mouse) all thoroughly enjoyed their day!

Among those who participated in the count were:

Bill Meyer, Bob Meyer, Bill Punkett, Dr. and Mrs. Peters and Mark Peters, Peg Feigley, Jeanne Delmann, Sandra Dextra, Barbara Lentz, Dot Reger, Sally Phillips, Bill and Mary Weise, Marge Self, Bill Brush, Mike Flieg, Elizabeth Goltermann, Dr. Mildred Trotter, Mrs. Eleanor Hayward, Mrs. K. Gardener, Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Deppe and nephew, Bertha Massie, Karen Haller, Andy Bromet, Kathryn Arhos, Dick and Mitzi Anderson, Kay Stewart, Frank Kime, Norman and Betty Parker, Dolly Schultz, Miss Poe, Damon Kirby, Nick Fiorita, Father Mulligan and biology class and Prof. Hathaway, Mark Paddock, Earl and Connie Hath, Barbara Maag and nephew, Judy Novak, Iona Horne, Mr. and Mrs. Boldt, Mr. Gould, Mr. and Mrs. Hofmeister, David Previr, Dr. John Mullins, Mr. and Mrs. Budde, Mr. and Mrs. Lenck and two daughters, Alberta Bolinger, Dorothea Vogel, Mr. Knickmeyer, Mrs. John Throckmorton, Mr. and Mrs. Vought, Mr. James Nelson, Miss Mary King, Miss Helen Koken, Miss Rachel Dudley, Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Lammert, Mrs. Hiram Norcross, Tim Meyer, Tim Barksdale and Steve Felker.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

The editors of the Bulletin would like to remind members that there are several regular field trips held each month. On the THIRD Saturday and the LAST Sunday of each month the Audubon Society meets at the gate of the Shaw's Garden Arboretum in Gray's Summit at eight o'clock, lunch box in hand.

The Webster Groves Nature Study Society also conducts field trips on other weekends and information on the locales can be procured from Mr. Paul Bauer, WA 2-7592. Mrs. Chris Arhos, ME 1-3090 is in charge of that Society's mid-week bird walk, held every Wednesday.

## **WHY MACHU PICCHU DIED AS A CITY**

By BILL FRITTS

Sarasota Herald Tribune

Machu Picchu in Peru was the last stronghold of the Incan empire, a harassed capital perched atop a granite cliff some 8,500 feet above sea level. It was never discovered by the Spaniards, whose persecutions had driven the Incas to this last hidden retreat, unknown to the world until its ruins were uncovered in 1911.

It had been a dead city for hundreds of years. The last Incan Chief, Tupac Amaru left this isolated eyrie in 1572 and came to Cuzco, the capital of Peru, where the Spaniards showered their usual mercies upon the Incans. They mangled his wife before his eyes and then beheaded him.

MACHU PICCHU today is one of the world's famed tourist attractions,

and every year thousands of persons from around the world visit it. They wind their way along dizzying switchbacks and along a gorge with vertical cliffs half a mile high. Finally tiny buses carry them across the boiling Urum-bama River and up a 1,500-ft. cliff to the fabled Incan Vilcabamba.

Most tourists, however, do not fully comprehend what they are seeing. They see and marvel at the ruins, the House of the Virgins, the high altar where the priests "tied the sun" at the winter solstice, the moats the signal tower 1,000 feet above the city.

What they probably don't know is why the city died, and became a scrub-covered ruin atop a cloud-swept crag.

THE ANSWER IS tied in with one of the vital problems of the world today — conservation.

Machu Picchu died because it ran out of water. The Incans had destroyed the trees on their crag faster than nature could replace them. The result was that springs which fed the capital dried up, and the Incans were forced to flee.

Journalist Jenkin Lloyd Jones, writing from Cuzco, pinpoints this lesson from Machu Picchu — a universal symbol of man's destruction of his natural resources, and subsequently the writing of his own death warrant.

"Wood, water and land. Man's abuse of them has written history," writes Jones.

"YOU TAKE a rickety C-46 out of Guatemala City and an hour later as you look down on the flat jungle you think you see thin peaks. They are not peaks. They are the tree-covered temples of Tikal. The plane lands amid mahogany trees. You walk a wilderness path up to a low plateau. But it isn't a plateau. Beneath the turf it is a paved square around which 100,000 people once lived.

"What happened to Tikal? Each year the Mayas burnt the fields to keep back the jungle, until the fields were so sour the city could not continue.

"The story is the same at fabulous Chichen Itza and Uxmal up in Yucatan."

JONES GOES ON to note that Greek legends are full of haunted groves peopled with nymphs and satyrs. But today — "You look at the bleak, bare hills of Attica and wonder where the groves went. They went for firewood and Greece is Europe's poor-house."

Jones continues: "Half an hour before your plane reaches the Tigris and Euphrates the bare Syrian desert shows the faint outline of what were once elaborate irrigation systems and rich fields. On the Baluchistan wasteland west of half-starved Karachi, there are the remains of terraces that were green when Alexander reached the Indus.

"EVEN TODAY cities drag their feet on sewage disposal plants. Factories buck anti-pollution laws, by threatening to move out of the state. Frightened chambers of commerce pass the word to the legislatures to go slow about cleaning up America."

Jones concludes:

"It's a good time to visit Machu Picchu. It's a good time to listen to the dead cities. The wind in the ruined doorways whispers:

'Abuse the Water and your children will wander. 'Destroy the woods and your works are nothing. 'Sour the soil and you die'."

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## BIRDING AT SEA...

By LORLI NELSON

Mid-October I sailed from New York to Europe. As usual the ship was followed by gulls. But my second pair of eyes, the binoculars, were still somewhere in my luggage. I could not possibly hunt for them in my stateroom as I would have missed seeing the disappearing skyline in an orange-red sky at sunset. This, and the splashing noise of the waves mixed with the grating sounds of the gulls flying about, made it indeed worthwhile remaining on deck.

After a day and a half out at sea, while sitting around the pool basking in heavenly sunshine, literally out of the blue a pair of Juncos appeared landing on the pool's railing nearby. A pair of Myrtle Warblers followed, and a pair of White-throated Sparrows joined the foursome a little later. Frankly, I could not believe my eyes, and at the same time I became concerned for my feathered friends. How will they get back to their natural habitat? What will they feed on? Where will they get the water from? But they seemed quite unconcerned showing vague tameness now and then, landing here and there, twittering and chirping in a happy way. The next day and the next day they were still around as we got further and further away from land. My concern for them grew considerably. I tried to feed them bread crumbs, and put water in a cut-down paper cup. No matter how hard I tried to coax them they would have no part of my crumbs and water. With no sunflowers on hand what else could I offer them? However, after a week at sea one early morning, when land was in sight, (Madeira, Portugal) those three pairs were one moment still aboard and then suddenly gone. I hope they reached land safely and found the kind of nourishment they lacked badly for so long. Well, if any reports come in of United States accidentals having been seen in Europe you all know how they made the voyage across . . .

When in Algeiras, near Gibraltar, a few Sandwich Terns skimmed and dived merrily for their daily food, while I mistook them for some kind of gulls. A sleek but large tern with a rather conspicuous long, black bill, and more noisy than any other tern I so far have observed. The Black-headed and Slender-billed Gulls gave me a bit of a hard time until I was lucky enough to see clearly their identifying marks. Along the southern and eastern coast of Spain the Common Gulls, the Herring Gulls, the Lesser Black-headed Gulls with a few Common Terns and Little Terns followed the ship most of the way. After Palma, Spain, the Mediterranean Gulls came into evidence, although not in large numbers.

While passing through the Strait of Bonifacio — HELP! — Where is it? — between the Islands of Corsica and Sardinia I came near to give up, what I had just begun, my birding in Europe. Among the gulls and few terns there were a few, but what were they? What on earth were they? I looked, checked and looked. No competent birders among the fellow passengers, either! So, I concluded, and all points to it, I might have seen the Audouin's Gull, but having neither one of the two St. Louis' Earls near to run for help I hesitate to say with definite certainty they were what I think they were. But my hope is there, at least. Naples, a busy port and city, has grown immensely since I was there last. Population explosion, by some called PROGRESS! From then on it poured, hailed, thundered with intermittent lightning until I disembarked at Genoa.

By train I arrived at Merano where blue sky, glorious sunshine, fall



coloring on the slopes of the mountains with snow-capped peaks greeted me. Soon afterwards the two days of heavy rain caused the catastrophic floods in Italy, which you have read about.

## **BIRDING IN THE SOUTH TYROL**

By LORLI NELSON

The South Tyrol, formerly part of Austria, in which Merano is located, belongs since World War I to Italy. A bilingual Province where Italian and German is spoken. Curious where Merano is? On a map of Italy let your finger slide from Florence straight north nearly to the Austrian border. Found it? The history of this town has remote origins. An old stone bridge over the Passer River, which flows through the town, dates back to Roman times. Merano, 1063 feet above sea level, is situated in a wide, picturesque valley where four other valleys meet, and protection from the north by the Alps give it almost an ideal climate, thus making it a health resort. This, and being a botanical wonder, a subtropical enclave, also made it into a paradise for excursions in all directions. A choice *ad infinitum*, and the easy way of ascending height has mushroomed since 1945!

It is here where I lived, on and off, nearly 13 years before I came to the New World, but it was there where the birding bug bit me. I am glad it happened, because now I realize how much I missed then, but this time I am trying to make up for.

Occasionally I set out with the tools of a birder. By bus I go to the surrounding villages where nearly every peasant house is known to me from my innumerable hoarding hikes for food during the last years of the war. Oh, what changes have taken place since! Parts of the lovely vineyards and orchards had to make room for new houses, villas, Hotels and Pensions. The latter is sort of a Hotel and very popular in Europe. Once when the sun shone brightly, the snowy mountain peaks glittered in a cloudless sky I found myself in the middle of an apple orchard. Birds made me pause and look. Tits everywhere, jumping from twig to branch, often hanging upside down, flying to the ground and back up into a tree as if they were animated for a dance. With my bible on hand, "A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain and Europe by Peterson," I learned there are 12 different kinds of Tits in Europe. With good fortune 7 should be in this area. First I spotted the Great Tit, the largest and the most common one of all. A showy bird, glossy black head, white cheeks, bright yellow underparts with a black band down the center. The latter is unmistakable. The Coal Tit, resembling our Chikadee, slightly smaller than the Great Tit, is a busy fellow wherever one encounters him. The Blue Tit, a handsome looking bird, and the only Tit with a bright cobalt-blue crown, wings and tail is so far my favorite. The plump but sweet, puffy Robins (much smaller than ours), almost shyless towards mankind, with their bright orange breasts and heads is another cunning one. But suddenly I was taken back by the sound like a laugh. Two Green Woodpeckers flew, in an undulating pattern, across the orchard landing in a deciduous tree. They gave me an entertaining show while they were merely trying to find something edible during daytime.

A huge tree in the distance had magnetic powers upon me and drew me closer. A true Chestnut Tree, partly still covered by last year's leaves with some half-opened, dried-up, spiny hulls of the nuts hanging down. This tree can be found near almost every peasant house as they love to roast the nuts

in wintertime. But something moved up and down and around the tree trunk. A creeper, but which one? For a good half an hour I switched continuously from my binoculars to the book to the binoculars. This little brown bird was not obliging, but the soft, humming, far away sound of a "Goshawk" seemed to startle him long enough to give me the needed opportunity of a good look to ease my frustration. It was the Short-toed Creeper, and not the Tree Creeper as I thought first. Relieved I thanked him and marched on, but not for long. Some hedges along a little stream added to my list the Field Fare. An alert thrush with grey head and rump, chestnut back and black tail. Flocks of Blackbirds with their orange-yellow bills flew above, across and beyond with screeching chatter. But the harsh, croaking sounds of the Carrion Crows overtuned them. Following a Carrion Crow with my binoculars I spotted a Hooded Crow sitting placidly in a tree. Its grey back and underparts, its best fieldmarks, are easily recognized. My cold feet, however, told me I should move on.

## **BIRDING ALONG A PATH**

By LORLI NELSON

Passing by a large woodpile near a peasant house I paused to listen to the musical thrills of a bird. A Wren, and when you see a wren in Europe you don't have to open your Peterson Field Guide. There is only one kind of wren, and that is that. Before my path curved I had the best look at a Yellowhammer (Bunting) sunning himself in an apple tree. Turning around slowly he showed off his yellow head and underparts, chestnut rump and streaked chestnut back and sides. I wish every bird would perform so nicely. No frustration and doubts would ever overcome a birder. But then it would make it all too easy for us.

Near a small, gurgling, glistening brook with its edges partly frozen and the banks covered with lush moss, ivy, spleenwort, ferns and some liverwort I discovered a nuthatch, with a tiny acorn in its beak, walking downhill among this dense groundcover. I was just about to walk on when suddenly I saw something out of the corner of my eye. Yes, something flew, but until it did land I did not know what it was. A Grey Wagtail. What a stunning bird! And very appropriately named, too, as he wags his tail, and his winter plumage is striking and brilliant. A slender, long-tailed, long-legged bird with yellow, black and white nicely divided on his body. I could not take my eyes off him until he decided to fly on.

Along the way a half grown alder tree was almost alive with tiny, twittering birds who, with their acrobatic antics, gave me a gay performance. Siskins abounded who are yellowish green in this part of the world. On a meadow the ever present Chaffinches with their white wing-bars and white outer tail-feathers were the busiest birds I had seen. Tree Sparrows were among them who appear with their brown heads as if they had fallen into a chocolate fudge. The Goldfinches with their dancing manners and bold marked, black and yellow wings and scarlet-red, black, white heads have more to show off than the Corn Buntings. A large, stocky bird, but otherwise utterly colorless.

Near a ravine pine trees were the hiding spot for some kind of birds. But they made it rather hard for me and never paused long enough in the open. A peasant coming down the path, shouldering two bundled trees, greeted me with the natural friendly, Tyrolean way, and could not help but ask



what I am looking at. I told him I am looking at birds. What? Birds you said? Yes, birds I replied to which he shook his head and, while bidding me goodbye, said: "Nothing better to look at than birds?" With a sheepish grin he walked on, but I would give anything to know the thoughts he took with him about me and birds! After this short, but amusing interlude those pine trees added to my list the Bullfinch. And Peterson certainly is correct saying it is a secretive bird, seldom leaving cover. But it is a striking one with gay rose-red underparts, blueish-grey upperparts, and a black cap and chin.

On my way back to Merano I flushed up two Pheasants which startled me, yet delighted to see them. Walking by villas in the outskirts the *Jasminum nudiflorum* with its bare, green branches already showed signs of forthcoming yellow blossoms. Quite unlike the *Jasminum officinale* from Persia, dormant until early summer. Some of the villa gardens can boast unusual trees and shrubs from distant lands. The *Pinus excelsa* from the Himmalyas, the *Cupressus arizonica* from northern Arizona, the *Morus alba* from China and many, many more, as well as palm trees — alas! — not identified yet which, when snow flurries fall upon, appear somewhat out of place here.

Entering the garden of the house a pair of Magpies flew towards the stately *Sequoia sempervirens* near the gate with their fast, loud noises as if to say: "A welcome back to the birder."

at present, via Cavour 97  
MERANO (Bolzano) Italy

## **SIERRA CLUB TRIP TO VENEZUELA, SURINAM AND GUYANA**

January - February, 1967

*By your chronicler, JUNGLE JAIME*

Friday the Thirteenth (of January): A morning non-stop flight in a tri-motor "Whisperjet", with occasional cloud-skimming between Saint Louis and Miami in only two hours, brought me not far above the vast swamps of The Everglades as we descended for a landing, and I looked in vain for burrowing owls between the runways as we became ground-borne because oddly enough, they used to inhabit this busy, noisy place.

Saturday, January 14: After quaffing the most delicious beverage I can recall, served cold from a keg in a downtown Miami fruit shop and consisting of papaya and lemon juice blended with milk and honey, I prevailed upon a sympathetic bartender at the airport's Pan American Airways "Clipper Club" to permit me to listen to the afternoon broadcast from New York of my favorite opera on his radio in the back service area so, perched on a stool among full and empty cases of soft drink mixes, coat rack, ice-making machine, pillows, cartons, paper napkins, dish towels and dirty glasses, I awaited departure time while sipping free drinks on the house, courtesy of my new friend who is also an opera fan.

A two-hour-and-forty-five-minute evening flight took me to the Caracas airport where Senora Josefina, who had made arrangements for part of our Venezuelan travels, met me. Two of our group of twenty, from Boston, had already arrived, while the West Coast contingent was not expected for hours, so I went to bed in our hotel near La Guaira, seaport for Caracas.

Sunday, January 15: My roommate is Al, leader of our group, who has

taken Sierra Club trips to Chile and New Zealand and loves to ice-climb in our own Northwest. On our way back to the airport, along the La Guaira waterfront, we notice brown pelicans diving for fish and the frigate (man-o'-war) birds soaring majestically high above us.

A 450-mile flight in an ancient (as aeroplanes go) DC-3 Dakota to Canaima (God of Vengeance) in southeastern Venezuela, via a refuelling stop at Ciudad Bolivar on the Rio Orinoco, brought us to a thatched open hut where we had lunch and watched a Dominican priest bless a sick baby held by its Indian mother. One of our group is a physician, who said the child suffered from scalp scabs, eye disease and probably parasites. Rudi Trufino, our new host, soon showed us a jungle path up and around the impressive Canaima Falls of the Carrao River, amber color from tannin, as in our own North Woods. Enroute we watched a line of leaf-cutting ants carrying purple blossoms and green leaf segments across the earth near our feet. After a canoe ride we arrived at Ucaima (Coming together, attracting, absorbing), the Trufino place, about 1,300 feet elevation above sea level. Rudi originally came from Holland his Austrian wife, Gerte, from Salzburg. Their two blonde daughters, quite conspicuous among dark people, age 3 and 5 years, prefer their birthday suits, and a third daughter, 7 years old, attends a Caracas boarding school. Willie, their helper, used to be from Texas, did not like life with the Marines, and keeps a worm-like snake in a bottle of debris and sand, hoping to find an herpetologist for more precise identification. We were fascinated by a six-inch caterpillar with two three-inch upright antennae on its posterior.

Monday, January 16: With three Indian helpers and ten Sierra Clubbers, Rudi started up-river in the morning. The aluminum canoe with our gear is a veteran indeed and the extensive repairs amidships remind Rudi to tell us that it was severely damaged when two American and Italian visitors stole it one night and drowned when swept over the Canaima Falls nearby.

Harry, wildlife artist for Abercrombie and Fitch, is an excellent birder, a real professional, and within only a few minutes identified the bat falcon, Amazon kingfisher, white-wing swallows, linedated woodpecker ("carpintero"), yellow-billed tern, black hawk, green heron, common egret, crested caracara, flocks of parakeets, yellow-headed parrots, turkey vultures ("T.V."), anhinga and tropical kingbirds. During a long portage around the first rapids above Canaima Falls, we crossed Rudi's airstrip (for smaller craft) and transferred to a big dugout canoe holding all of us and our equipment. Continuing upstream on the Carrao River to the mouth of one of its tributaries, the Churun, on our starboard, we entered the smaller river, noticing bats and a termite nest mistaken at a distance for an owl on a dead tree leaning over the banks. Fine birders, we!

Tuesday, January 17: This is another "black water" river. Camp was made last night near a tremendous triangular mountain, fifty miles long on each side and 3,000 to 9,000 feet high, called Auyan-Tepui (Tepui means mountain) where Jimmy Angel's aeroplane landed (and still rests in a swamp) in 1936. Our war surplus (the war of 1939) jungle hammocks, cooking equipment and some other gear are from Lowell Thomas' expedition here in 1957. At dawn we heard the guan (a gallinaceous bird) calling, similar to the curassow (resembling a turkey), named after Curacao, an island off the Venezuelan coast. Our swimming beach has pebbles among pink sand. Across the river in front of us, after we got underway, flew a brilliant orange-red male Guinanan cock-of-the-rock, causing a crisis among

the birders whose excitement nearly upset our craft. There is also an Andean cock-of-the-rock. Both have the bill hidden by frontal plumes. A kiskadee sang his name from a tree with smooth reddish bole similar to California's madrone. Graceful white-wing swallows skimmed closely above the surface of the water. The tropical kingbird, a hawk, cinnamon flycatcher and jacamar bird displayed themselves. Cicadas droned a chorus at portages as a background for the solo swatting of a machete clearing an easier passage for us. Night was spent at New Year's Camp with fireflies.

Wednesday, January 18: Our dugout canoe, which holds fourteen people and their gear, is made from the curiarara, Indian word for the canoe tree. In these forests (or jungles, if you prefer glamorous words) are ocelot, capuchin and howler monkeys, fer-de-lance, bushmaster and rattlesnakes. The three poisonous snakes are all pit vipers, by the way, but represent both the neurotoxic and haemotoxic venom respectively.

Before coming to South America, Rudi practised and successfully pretended deafness in Holland to avoid military conscription. He detests the corrupt Spanish missionaries but respects an enlightened French mission in western Venezuela known as Santa Maria de Irawato, which does not attempt proselytism nor shame of one's body. The true Christians give help with no G-strings attached.

Our third river camp was made in sight of our destination, Angel Falls. We admired a scarlet macaw flying across the river valley at dusk and noticed a one-inch ant which can paralyze a person for twenty-four hours. We are getting to know each other well enough by now to tease and joke, and made Norton and Carol blush by our ribald remarks after they took a wrong turn in the trail and were missing for a while. . . . June suggested he exhibit his elbows . . . and the conversation became progressively more boisterous and irreverent.

Thursday, January 19: According to Rudi, there are about 2,000 varieties of orchids in this area although, being from Missouri, I'll have to be shown them to believe it! An eagle was soaring from his aviary near the brink of Angel Falls as we crossed the Churun River and began the steep ascent to its base on a forest trail around large fig tree buttresses, across slippery tree trunks spanning a lively mountain stream, and through antherium (cala lily) and other flowers and berries of white, red and orange. Parrot feathers near the rocky path betrayed a hawk's predatory nature. A pleasing aroma like anise or licorice sometimes was perceptible in the air. At our vantage viewpoint on a large boulder we rested and were delighted by a curious flycatcher resembling a robin but with a black stripe through its eyes. Black hummingbirds darted among flowering trees beneath us and someone claimed to see a blue-eyed owl riding on a condor's back, one of our favourite group jokes throughout the remainder of the trip!

The base of Angel Falls is about three thousand feet above sea level, the brink on top of Auyan-Tepui, six thousand feet elevation. With the second hand of my wrist watch I noted the average length of time water took to fall the three thousand feet sheer drop, about eighteen times the height of Niagara, or forty seconds.

Soil here apparently has insufficient mineral content for bacterial decay, and masses of roots replace the customary humus necessary for crops as we know them. Clearing and burning a plot of jungle is common but the soil is soon depleted from the temporary productivity provided by ashes, and the forest resumes its interrupted cycle.

Our three Indian helpers are Jose, Mauro and Leoncio. They push, pull, pole and rock our canoe through shallow rapids when the hull scrapes the rocky river bed, and jump barefoot into the swift water. With a machete for clearing a path they sometimes lead us through the jungle and are more adept at spotting things than we Europeans. They are at home in these places because this *is* their home, although two of them are relative strangers to this particular area. Rudi claims that the fer-de-lance here and the bushmaster do not climb trees, so we need look only on the ground. Other areas do have venomous tree serpents. Shavings on a large log teeming with ants were identified by Jose as those from a "carpintero", and we also noticed tracks of a tapir. The scenery is similar to Yosemite Park with a polished dome, similar to El Capitan, and U-shaped valleys suggesting glaciation, although the talus slopes are more lush here. We portage frequently around rapids. There are dragonflies, the sound of crickets, tree frogs, toads, cicadas and — perhaps best of all — silence.

Jose, our chief boatman, is also a canoe maker and musters as much manpower as he can to make one far up in the mountains, as he did with ours. The feat must be accomplished within one week after the canoe tree is felled to prevent its drying out because, when a sufficiently large mass of the inner log has been hollowed and burned out, the gunwales are spread further and further apart by successively longer thwarts. Holes are drilled through the hull to assure reasonably uniform thickness for proper balance and later plugged. When all is ready the canoe builders take their massive product down the mountain with such momentum that it resembles an avalanche, battering through anything in its way. Then, however, when they finally reach the river, they inevitably discover they have forgotten to make paddles!

Only about two hundred people from the "outside" have seen Angel Falls as we see them, from the land and water. When we descended the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon of Arizona in about 1955, we were equally exclusive in this respect.

Protective coloration and camouflage are remarkably evident in tree frogs as they change from white to dark brown, and in a species of butterfly which alights upon a particular leaf surface blending perfectly with the outside of its upright wings folded together. Ferns and mosses are abundant.

Magazines such as "Argosy" and "True" perpetuate myths about this area by publishing fraudulent articles. Another fraud, so we are told, is Mr. Grisby, who accepted \$70,000 paid by an older man for the former's assurance of getting an alleged cache of gold from a hiding place near the remains of Angel's aeroplane. This credulous gambler became so destitute that he had to leave Venezuela by shipping out as one of a cargo ship's crew. Diamond camps are in this area and the accounts of corruption, intimidations, claim stake stealing and murder, usually instigated by agents of De Beers to maintain their monopoly, could easily be factual. The second aeroplane to land atop Auyan-Tepui belonged to Grisby and became mired there in 1966, although it was later extricated with the assistance of a helicopter. Television offers were made when he walked back to civilization and later brought back three parties of fortune hunters to ogle at gold nuggets he had previously strewn upon the ground as bait. Diamond mining here is now fluvial because the diamonds were washed down ages ago by the streams. Jimmy Angel is now dead but his wife and son survive. She dared him to land his aeroplane atop the mountain nurturing the Falls which now bear his name, the highest falls in the world. The craft became mired and the remains are still there.

It was a Flamingo, the first metal one made by Curtis, of the type used for mail transport only thirty years or so ago. Parts of its aluminum were cut up to make pots for boiling water in preparation for his wife's accouchement, but some Indians had seen the aeroplane come down and "delivered" her to a doctor just in time. All of this area is now a National Park, but so different from ours. No "improvements" whatsoever, and practically no people. Only wilderness. There are no bench marks so the elevations above sea level are only estimated, but there are earthquakes and last week Gerte was frightened by one lasting seven minutes.

As Betty was trying to get in our canoe from her customary swim, she added a "female goose" to her life list. U.S. Army surplus jungle hammocks are surprisingly comfortable and there are no complaints of back trouble. Our food and drink consist of peanuts (not "cacahuate", as in Mexico, but "mani"), chocolate, rye bread, jam, canned oleomargarine, soup, beans, spaghetti, cheese, biscuits, brackers, expresso coffee dripping from a funnel-shaped muslin container, and tea with a dash of rum if you wish.

Angel Falls are called "Churun Meru" by the Indians. Churun is the River's name and Meru means falls. At dawn their white spray and mist formed elongated clouds which drifted down the valley in an interesting and unusual display of vapor transference from water.

The Indian name for an inch-worm on my finger is "haruca", and the fireflies we see at dusk, apparently unknown in California, are actually beetles, by the way. After supper we discussed a native dance of Venezuela, the "joropo", and noted names of places in Caracas where we could see it.

Cassava bread (not to be confused with the casaba melon) is eaten by our Indians and prepared from the bitter roots of a yucca-like plant in the genus "euphorbia", named for Euphorbus, a Greek physician, and consisting mostly of herbs and shrubs with an acrid, milky juice. This spurge family also includes cascarilla, castor oil, rubber plants and the familiar milkweed. The roots are ground, washed and squeezed in a "sebcan", a long, woven, suspended, tubular receptacle which extracts the poisonous juice before manioc flour is made. The source of tapioca is also these tuberous roots full of nutritious starch. An Indian drink called "cachiri" is made from a different, sweet yucca-like juice fermented. Curare on arrow tips is used for hunting birds, and the remarkable barbasco poison is also a root, used for fish kills and abortions.

Friday, January 20: During our breakfast of oatmeal, which Leoncio flavors by sneezing into a big black pot he tends over the fire, Norton presided over a presentation ceremony by making a polished speech at the end of which a large "dietary finessee" button was pinned to Betty Adamson's shirt in recognition of her lust (even more than mine) for peanuts and chocolate.

We started downstream on our return voyage and admired anew the white-banded swallows over the river, found only south of the Orinoco. I was entertained by a pair of blue damsel flies mating on my arm, their position and long appendages reminding me of aeroplanes refueling in flight. We saw a yellow-breasted trogon bird and the brilliant plumage of this solitary forest dweller led me to muse about the Central American quetzal (also a trogon) and how a bird can change the history of man, because the persistent legend of Quetzalcoatl, principal ornithological deity of the superstitious Aztecs, whose return from the East was prophesied by the priestcraft even



before Montezuma encouraged that unfortunate emperor's vast armies to capitulate finally to the invasion of Cortez and his four hundred adventurers as a prognostication come true. The Spaniard was, at least at first, regarded by the Aztecs as a god come home.

We were rather indifferent to possible danger, and soon after watching an alligator splash into the water from a log where he had been sunbasking near the bank, we took a refreshing swim with him as chaperone at our lunch stop, New Year's Camp, and swung laughing on liana vines dangling from tree branches overhanging the river.

The sight of an inhabited hornet's nest returned me to more immediate considerations and as I reached for my venerable straw sombrero from Colombia decorated with a lei of shells from Tahiti as a crown band, I noticed it was no longer damp, as it was when we were nearer Angel Falls. The weather was becoming sunnier and drier, and my head protection also served as a sling psychrometer for determining relative humidity. The rivers are high now, although it is supposed to be the dry season. As in Mexico, July and August comprise the rainy season and mean higher water.

In the tropics there usually is no winter, no summer, but only dry or wet seasons. The sky is more cloudy here now, also. But weather everywhere is usually "unusual" if one is to believe the local inhabitants, and we accepted the information with good-natured skepticism.

We heard a band of ten or fifteen howler monkeys in tree tops and their noise sounded like a mixture of a lion's roar, a cow's mooing and a ruffed grouse's booming. We did not make it to Orchid Island where we had planned to spend the night so stayed instead at our first camp when we were coming upstream. Before reaching this place we saw a pompadour cotinga (white wings, purple head and body), spotted sandpiper and the beautiful, spirited Amazon kingfisher, a favourite. Our Indians walk barefoot on stones which hurt our tender feet even in tennis shoes.

Saturday, January 21: Hammocks fell during the night, but only the ones with which "Helpful Jaime" assisted. His Navy knots do not seem to endure so well as they did a quarter of a century ago when he was a sailor. As for our appearance, we have doubts about our being accepted at the hotel near Caracas tonight.

The Indians with us are interesting men. Jose, with his red baseball cap, the Chief wears a gold cross around his neck and has a pair of black leather shoes with no laces, perhaps a status symbol because he seldom wears them. Mauro is boatman for the aluminum dunnage canoe, also used as an extra craft, for safety, on the lower parts of the rivers. Leoncio is a lowly dishwasher who talks to himself and hums while scrubbing dirty pots with beach sand. We call him Smiles. He is an "outsider" to the other two Indians, who let him know his place.

The smaller Churun River reminds me of some of the delightful spring-fed streams known for float trips in the Missouri Ozarks. The scenery here is more spectacular, however, and mist-shrouded towering peaks give an appearance to the landscape reminding one of a lost world or "Lost Horizon" and Shangrila.

The bluish-green slate color of the familiar white-wing swallow perched in a river snag, the flocks of parrots, the olivaceous cormorant, blut morpho butterflies, soaring swallow-tail kite, white-tail hawk, turkey vultures, great blue herons (GBH), and white-banded swallows (similar to the barn swallow silhouette, with a forked tail) passed by us as our canoe continued rapidly downstream. We especially admired a pair of macaws with blue



head, red wings and long trailing red tail, as they flew across the widening river. A pair of king vultures soared above us, their feet dangling, with bold white and black wing pattern. Doves, too. And banana trees (in South America "platano" is not used, as in Mexico, but banana or "cambures"). Red dangling blossoms added color to the kapok (ceiba) tree. Mushroom cups shaped like a small funnel, with concentric rings inside remind one of a tree's cross section. As we make our last portage before reaching Ucaima, we watch the swallow-tail swifts dart bat-like above Rudi's airstrip, and know that we shall remember this fabulous, wild country which breeds colorful creatures and men like Rudi, lean, alert and tough. He must be to survive.

While making our way from Ucaima to Canaima to get the aeroplane, we saw again the leaf-cutting ants on the portage trail in the jungle and were reminded of an interesting symbiotic relationship because they do not eat the leaves but place them in their ant hill tunnels where the segments later grow fungus to feed the larvae when they hatch.

The contrast between Ucaima (Rudi's and Gerte's place) and Canaima, where odd tourists come for the week end, with butterfly nets and so forth, is striking. Some of the rum-soaked people at the busy bar remind us of characters from Somerset Maugham and the South Seas. Of course we aren't peculiar at all, with our binoculars, crazy hats, cameras, dark goggles and souvenirs!

Rudi, we are told, is from a prominent banking family in The Hague. His wife, Gerte, a jewel artisan from Salzburg, first came to Ucaima as a tourist and they went alone in an old canoe to Angel Falls. Now they are looking for a reliable couple to stay at their place while they take a vacation.

Today is our Avensa (Venezuelan Airline) DC-3 Dakota aeroplane's twenty-fifth anniversary, we learn as we examine a plate in the pilot compartment after loading our dunnage while the pilot went off for some drinks with his local girl friend attired in a bikini. When he finally returned we became airborne all too soon and buzzed Canaima Falls so low and close that the spray covered our seat windows and the wings almost swept the churning surface of the pool below the Falls. First for starboard passengers, then another pass for the port passengers, to get an unusual fisheye view of the Falls. We were too scared to take photographs but no one died of fright. "Latin" people love to show off in aircraft as much as in automobiles. On the 450-mile flight back to Maquiesta Airport (near Caracas) I tried to ignore a loose screw on the starboard motor cowling outside of my window seat; as I watched it get looser and looser for nearly three hours of mixed anxiety and resignation, I admired the colorful display of pendulous red blossoms on the kapok trees in the vast forests beneath us and tried to finish a New Yorker magazine profile about Eric Hoffer.

Was I happy to be back in civilization that night at the hotel? No, I was not. We were better off out there in the wilderness and enjoyed ourselves and each other more. We had come to know each other fairly well in only a few days, but now that warm, spontaneous communication between us seemed to suffer as we became part of a large city again. We had lost our innocence. We had become respectable.

Further adventures in Venezuela, Surinam and Guyana will be presented in subsequent installments.

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